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ART. IV.—*Ancient Sepulchres of Pánduvaram Déwal, in Southern India.* By CAPTAIN NEWBOLD, F.R.S., &c.

ABOUT three miles and a half to the E. N. E. of Chittoor, in North Arcot, lie the ancient sepulchres called Pánduvaram Déwal, in a secluded valley, hemmed in by rocks. The head of the valley is closed by a spur from the Eastern Ghauts, running nearly north and south. Through an abrupt transverse break in this ridge the stream which waters the valley runs to the Poinay river, which it joins about a mile further east. Beyond, and blue in the distance, a mass of irregular and strongly indented rocks closes the view to the eastward.

Having passed over the ridge from the Chittoor side by a narrow stone causeway, and descended into this apparently isolated spot, I was astonished to find myself among the cromlech-like monuments of a race of which tradition even is silent. It was not yet dawn, but the pyramid of faint Aurora Borealis-like light, usually preceding it in India, and the stars, which glimmered brightly, threw an obscure light over the whole, in which the fantastic piles of grey granite, the tors, and logging-stones seemed to form part of this silent city of the dead, and harmonized strangely in their ghastly greyness with the unearthly aspect of the scene. As if nothing should be wanting to heighten the effect, sheets of summer lightning ever and anon lent their livid colouring to the scene.

Seated on one of the tombs, I awaited the breaking of day in silent enjoyment.

Dawn came at length, and I found myself in the midst of prostrate sepulchres, irregularly covering an area of more than a square mile. Having roused the Reddis, Karnams, and Taláris of a small village on the spot, I put myself under their guidance, and proceeded to a closer and more sober inspection of the locality than the stars and sheet-lightning, eked out by imagination, had afforded.

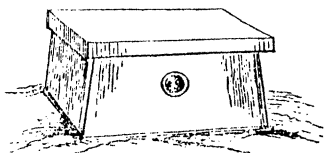
To the right of the causeway the tombs were scanty, so we bent our course to the left, in the direction of the river. Here the valley, near the base of the hill, was completely covered with the great unhewn slabs, circles, and mounds of prostrate tombs. Two or three only had been left standing by the sacrilegious hands of the Indian quarriers and stone-masons—the Wudras—who, finding the enormous rough blocks and slabs of granite used in their construction more convenient than cutting them out of the adjacent rock, have not scrupled to violate the sanctuary of the dead.

Other hands, still less scrupulous,—those of the hidden-treasure hunter and the antiquarian,—have assisted to scatter around the human bones and the fragments of the terra-cotta sarcophagi and vessels which the slabs once covered.

On the ascent of the rocky ridge overlooking this great cemetery, the guides conducted me to three large tombs in tolerable preservation, surrounded by the remains of many others.

The most perfect of the three lies to the N. E. of the group, crowning the summit of a high boss of bare rock.

It consists, like most of the rest, of an enormous nearly-square slab of granite or gneiss laid flat on the bottom: this forms the floor. Four similar slabs, placed vertically on it, on their edges, constitute the sides; and another, still larger, placed horizontally on their top, forms an



overhanging roof.

The tombs are usually surrounded by one or two circles of stones, placed upright on their edges. The stones at the head and foot of the tombs are higher usually than the rest. Earth is often piled up in the interior and round the sides, giving the whole the appearance of standing on a low mound. Through one of the side slabs is cut a circular aperture, large enough to admit a moderate sized man's body, generally a little more than eighteen inches in diameter. The sarcophagi containing the bodies are placed on the floor-slab, and covered, to the depth of three or four feet, with earth. In many instances, the lower part of the tomb is sunk into the earth itself.

The side slabs of the tomb in question do not rise above two feet above the surface of the earth and rubbish which cover their base. The circular hole is in the side slab, facing the N. E. The major axis of the tomb runs N. E. Having crept through the aperture, I found the interior nearly filled with earth and stones. The lips of the apertures are often much worn, as if by the constant friction of persons squeezing themselves in. These small apertures, and the lowness of the interior (being, as I have observed, filled to the depth of three or four feet) gave colouring to the vulgar tradition that this great cemetery was nothing less than a city of pigmies. The size of the bones of its once occupants fully disproves all fancies of this kind.

The slab forming the roof measures 13 feet by 12, and its average thickness  $4\frac{1}{2}$  inches. It projects 18 inches beyond the side walls, and is larger, though not so thick, as the roof-slab of the great cromlech near Plas Newydd, in Anglesea, which measures 12 feet 7 inches by 12 feet,—a curious similarity.

The tomb, a pace or two to the S.W. of this, is less perfect. One of the side-slabs has been taken away, and the earth and sarcophagus removed from the interior, leaving the floor-slab exposed. The circular aperture, which is made in the side facing to the S. E., has been enlarged into a complete gap; but from the segment of the circle still remaining, it is evident that it did not differ in dimensions from that in the tomb already described.

The interior measurements of the side-slabs are—

Height	..	..	5 to 5½ feet, east side highest.
Length	..	..	9¼ feet.
Breadth	..	..	7¼ „

The interior contained nothing but a few fragments of stone, and a circular flat piece of granite, intended, probably, for a mill-stone.

Tomb No. 3 lies a few paces S. W. from No. 2. It is of similar construction, and in tolerable preservation. The circular aperture faces in a direction not corresponding with those of Nos. 1 and 2.

I dug through the earth and rubbish which partially filled the interior, but found that it had been rifled of its contents.

Leaving the sepulchres on the hill, I descended to those in the valley at the base; and, having selected one which had evidently never been disturbed, immediately commenced operations. The earth dug through was of brick-like hardness, and encumbered with roots of bushes. At about a foot below the surface, we came to the top of the terra-cotta sarcophagus, and with great difficulty succeeded in clearing it in an almost perfect state.

It was a coffin-shaped trough, rounded at the extremities, and deeply rimmed at the edges, 6½ feet long, 10 inches deep, and from 1 foot 10 inches to 3 feet broad. It was filled with hard earth and human bones. At A, which lay to the east, were the fragments of a skull, and pieces of pottery.



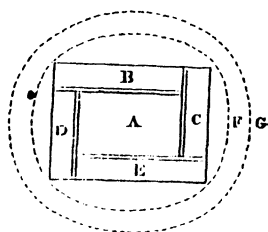
It stood on eight hollow terra-cotta legs, which rested on the floor-slab of the tomb, 1 foot 3 inches long, and about 3½ inches in diameter at top, tapering gradually at the bottom, which terminates in two convex rims thus.

Beneath the head of the sarcophagus, on the floor-slab, stood a small elegantly-shaped vase of fine black clay, filled with ashes and earth. Others, of common red terra-cotta, stood below, which were filled with earth. The villagers state they have found rice in them.



A large nest of white ants was found under the sarcophagus; this may account for the disappearance of the rice, which it is possible,

like the wheat in the mummy-pits of Egypt, may have been preserved for ages in the dry climate of India. It is probable that the rice, according to ancient Chinese and Tartar custom, was intended for the use of the deceased in Hades, and that some of the other vessels contained water. They differ essentially in shape from the common terra-cotta vessels of India now in use, but do not indicate any former greater state of refinement. Spear-heads and swords of an antique fashion, masses of crumbling rust, have been found by the villagers under the sarcophagi. The annexed diagram will give some idea of the ground-plan of one of these tombs.



A is the great floor slab.

B, C, D, E, the four side-slabs on their edges.

F, G, the outer circles of slabs on their edges.

No inscriptions or sculptures were found. I have observed similar sepulchres, though not covered by cromlechs, surrounded by similar circles of about 18 feet in diameter, at the Red Hills, and scattered in secluded positions over various parts of Southern India. They exist on the Nilgherries, but nowhere in such great abundance as at Pánduvaram Dewal. I assembled the Brahmans of the village, and asked them whether they had any written history of the spot, or of the city to which so extensive a cemetery belonged. They answered in the negative; but referred the tombs to the Pándus of the heroic age, as they do everything which they are at a loss to account for.

The absence of the remains of a town or city in the vicinity may either be regarded as an indication of the high antiquity of these Cyclopean sepulchres, which have survived the obliteration of the more slenderly constructed habitations of their occupants while living; or more probably that the tribes who constructed them were nomades, who dwelt in tents or in rudely-constructed huts. The number of the tombs clearly shows that the people, if a nomade tribe, must have made a long sojourn in this locality. That they must have been a people little advanced in the arts is evident from the absence of all sculpture, embellishment, and inscriptions. Their pottery, however, is often of a very fine description; and that they were acquainted with the art of smelting and working iron, is clear from the implements found.

It is curious that no chisel marks are found on the vast blocks which they have managed to separate, by fire and wedge probably, from the neighbouring granitic rocks; and that the circular apertures through the centre of the side slabs appear to have been knocked through by a hammer or hard stone, and yet done with considerable nicety. The present Wudras (stone quarriers) look at them with astonishment, and say they must have been the work of the Rákshasas, or giants of old. The exterior of the blocks presents as time-worn an aspect as that of the rocks whence they were taken; whereas the blocks in the quarries of Syene and Bijanugger look as fresh as if hewn yesterday.

It is well known that when the Brahmins originally settled in Southern India, they found it occupied by sects of Buddhists, and by races of men who, from their savage mode of life, dwelling among rocks and forests, and their determined hostility to the new comers, they are pleased to term Rákshasas—giants, or evil demons.

In course of time, many of these tribes were converted to Brahmanism; the rest took refuge in the mountains and most inaccessible parts of the country. The Khonds, Chenchuars, and other half savage tribes that now inhabit the jungles of the Ghauts, are supposed to be their descendants. Yet we look in vain among the haunts of these tribes for sepulchres like those I have attempted to describe.

It is certain that they are not those of any of the sects of Buddha, Jineswara, or Brahma, or of the snake-worshippers who preceded them.

Whose bones, then, do these huge blocks of granite cover?

Throw down one of the side slabs, with its circular aperture, of the sepulchre of Pánduvaram Déwal, and we have the cromlech or dolmen. Clear away the Cyclopean superstructure, and we behold the Druidical circles and the cairn. If we turn our eyes northerly to the mountains of Circassia, we there start with surprise on seeing an absolute fac-simile of the mysterious tombs of Southern India, with the circular aperture complete. (*Vide* engraving in Bell's Circassia). The Circassian sepulchre is similarly beyond the reach of history. Nor is it difficult to find a family resemblance to the Indian circles and mounds, with their contents of human bones, spear-heads, ashes, and pottery, in those which so thickly stud the vast steppes of Tartary and Northern Europe. They appear to me to be the almost only tangible vestiges remaining to us, except Holy Writ, of certain similarities in the languages of nations now wide asunder, and the traditions which prevail in almost every Eastern nation, of an extensive migration, at a period of high antiquity, of one family of the

human race, radiating in various directions from one given centre, at a time "when the whole earth was of one family and one speech," which the Lord confounded, and from thence "did scatter them abroad upon the face of all the earth;" in a word, they are the foot-marks of the builders of Babel, witnesses of the truth of sacred history—all eloquent in their silence, similarity, and distinctness.

It is not a little curious that similar ideas of construction of cromlechs by supernatural means, by dwarfs, and fairies, &c., should obtain both in India and Europe. But I have already observed that the bones found in those of India, and the dimensions of the sarcophagi themselves, do not indicate either that the inmates were dwarfs, or that the human race has at all degenerated in stature since the time in which these skeletons were animate. I also found this to hold good in the measurement of many of the male mummies which lived two thousand years ago in Memphis.